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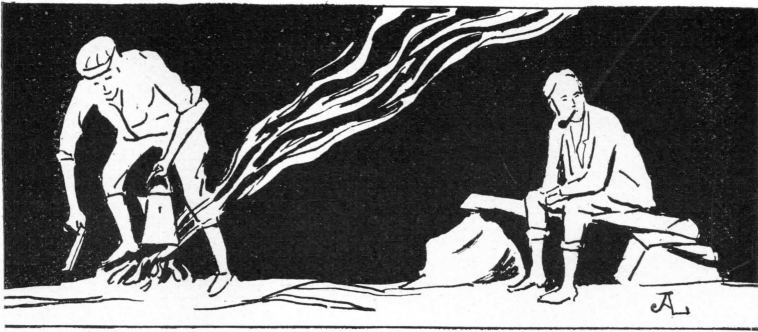
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Out of a Forester's Life

By J. A. Larsen*

"Speaking of narrow escapes," said Jack as he arose, and threw an old tamarack root on the fire, causing it to blaze up and reveal three weather beaten faces, three pipes, and three pairs of heavy boots under a mass of dark spruce boughs, "I think the closest call I ever had was early on fine



spring morning when my partner and I hit it for the Flat-head Middle Fork divide on snowshoes. The snow lay ten to fifteen feet deep, it was smooth going and we were sure making time! We had just negotiated one of them deep snow banks hanging high up under the leeward side of the crest, and seeming undecided-like whether to stay or tear loose, when there was a heck of a rumble and roar behind us. Turning around we saw trees, rocks, snow and the whole mountain side like tumbling into the canyon below. It was then we broke the snow shoe cross country records clear in two. Believe me, we lost no time making fresh tracks. Had we been a minute later in crossing that bank of snow we would have been sitting there now cool, calm, and comfortable-like waiting for somebody to dig us out this summer or next.

"Come to think of it, though," muttered Jack after a minute's silence, broken only by the snapping of the fire, "I must have been closer to settling up my account the spring I took my wife and little girl for a camping trip up the Mid-

* Should you desire to know who Jack is inquire of the author.

dle Fork. Coming to the place where Hungry Horse Creek tumbles into the main river I wanted to ford rather than to climb eighteen hundred feet, mostly straight up. So over I goes before anyone could say 'boo,' Anyway the river was making such a noise that the rest couldn't hear me. When my wife was safely landed on the other bank I returned for our daughter, but exactly in mid-stream the rush of the water cut all the gravel from under the hoofs of my horse and left me squirming in the water. After cavorting around for a while I got the horse into an eddy and steered him straight for the bank. His shoes soon struck solid rock and we began coming out. But it was a smooth shelving rock slanting outward into the river and before we could say 'Andy Gump' we slid off backward into the river like a schooner slipping off the ways. We went clear out of sight at once, but I kept the reins. Then began our free joy ride down that boiling, swirling mass of mad water. There was my wife on one side my little girl on the other, alone and helpless on the other side, no help in sight, and no way of getting across or back to town and me headed straight for the box canyon where the water just stood boiling on end-like. Each time she saw my bald head she knew it would be her last look on me alive. But just before swinging into the canyon the horse hooked up on a large boulder and we dragged ourselves out—more dead than alive.

"Yes, that was a dum close shave all right," said Jack reflectively, "but drowning aint no fit end for a forester anyhow."

